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SPEECH

OF

HON. CORNELIUS COLE,
OF CALIFORNIA,

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ON

ARMING THE SLAVES.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

FEBRUARY 18, 1864.

WASHINGTON, D. C.:

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ARMING THE SLAVES

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REMARKS ON THE

WASHINGTON D. C.
1881
PUBLISHED BY THE
BUREAU OF ETHNOLOGY

S P E E C H.

The SPEAKER stated that the next business in order was the consideration of House bill No. 51, to establish a Bureau of Freedmen's Affairs, reported from the select committee on the subject, on which the gentleman from California [Mr. COLE] was entitled to the floor.

Mr. COLE arose and spoke, as follows:

Mr. SPEAKER, since obtaining the floor last evening, I have found a little time to condense such views of this bill as I wish to present to the House, and the few notes I have prepared will contribute sensibly to that desirable end. The time of this body while the war lasts, I say it with all deference, is too precious to be taken up with vain utterances, and I acknowledge to a very considerable degree of diffidence, lest betrayed I should be into the use of unnecessary words.

It is clear now that the learned gentleman from Ohio [Mr. Cox] who last addressed the House on this question, and who has written a book, has not always entertained the opinions in reference to the negro that are generally accorded to him. The elegantly written extracts that were read by the distinguished gentleman from Illinois [Mr. WASHBURNE] from *The Buckeye Abroad*, show that when its author was in Rome he did as the Romans did,* and I entertain a

* Mr. Cox, in his book of travels in Europe, describing St. Peter's, says: "In the meantime seraphic music from the Pope's select choir ravishes the ear while the incense titillates the nose. Soon there arises in the chamber of theatrical glitter, a plain unquestioned African, and he utters the sermon in facile Latinity, with graceful manner. His dark hands gestured harmoniously with the rotund periods, and his swart visage beamed with a high order of intelligence. He was an Abyssinian. What a commentary was here upon our American prejudices? The head of the great Catholic church surrounded by the ripest scholars of the age, listening to the eloquence of the despised negro; and thereby illustrating to the world the common bond of brotherhood which binds the human race."

I confess that, at first, it seemed to me a sort of theatrical mummery, not being familiar with such admixtures of society. But, on reflection, I discerned in it the same influence which, during the dark ages, conferred such inestimable blessings on mankind. History records that from the time of the revival of letters the influence of the church of Rome had been generally favorable to science, to civilization, and to good government. Why? Because her system held then, as it holds now, all distinctions of caste as odious. She regards no man, bond or free, white or black, as disqualified for the priesthood."

lively hope that when he becomes fully convinced that it is the fixed purposes of the nation to put down this insurrection by force, and in no other way, he will again pay respect to the injunction, "when in Rome do as the Romans do," and heartily co-operate with this side of the House, lending his powerful influence towards bringing about a peace in the only proper way. In fact I thought I discovered in some of his expressions last evening the outcroppings of genuine abolitionism. I should feel a little more certain on this point were it not that another and rather antagonistic idea seem to predominate throughout the gentleman's speech. He appears to be troubled with a sort of hallucination that the project to establish a Bureau of Freedman's Affairs is one grand scheme for the amalgamation of the white and the black races, nothing less, nothing more.

I have in vain tried to discover how the providing means of subsistence for the freedmen, and all the comforts that flow from paid industry, can have a tendency to promote amalgamation. And, notwithstanding the gentleman's most virtuous indignation against the bill, springing out of this idea, I am equally at a loss to know how persons who are exercising their own volition, and have perfect freedom of action, are any worse off in regard to this matter, than those whose purposes are subordinated by law to the desires of others.

If the honorable gentleman will consult the census reports he will find that the number of mulattoes in the single State of Virginia was some ten thousand more than in all the free States put together; and if his statement, made yesterday, be correct, that mulattoes do not propagate, it leaves a very strong presumption that amalgamation had something to do with this result.

The gentleman entertains strong feelings of distaste toward this side of the House, because, as he somehow infers, we are theoretically in favor of amalgamation; and I will not quarrel with that feeling so honestly entertained by him; for I remember that *de gustibus non disputandum*, and this business of amalgamating is purely a matter of taste. But how happens it that the very learned and astute gentleman from Ohio never conceived any disgust toward his quondam friends down South, who, as the census shows, were so very much addicted to the practice of amalgamating with their black slaves?

I will now turn from the honorable gentleman from Ohio to the proper consideration of the bill; not a more agreeable subject, to be sure, but more profitable, I hope, and I leave its humanitarian, its eleemosynary points for the consideration of gentlemen on the other side of the House, whose new-born affection for the black man renders it entirely safe to do so. I propose only to give attention to its bearing upon the war.

Power is virtue in a belligerent. A nation at war ought to strengthen itself in every possible way, or give up the strife. It is worse than folly, it is criminal, to protract a deadly conflict unnecessarily.

This bill to establish a Bureau of Freedmen's Affairs proposes, in effect, to shorten the war. The means of doing it are within our reach, the duty is before us, and we are called upon to act.

The reasons for employing colored men in the military service of the Government, and especially such colored men as are or have been in slavery, are to my mind overwhelming, and I feel constrained to urge extraordinary measures, if necessary, to obtain such service. The bill under consideration must have a powerful tendency to promote this object, and ought therefore to find the favor of loyal men. I choose to consider it from this point of view, because the exigencies of an active, long-continued, and still vigorous rebellion are upon us. In peace times I should consider it in altogether a different light.

The bill provides for the taking in charge by the War Department of the freed people of the country, "to the end that said freedmen and the Government of the United States shall be mutually protected, and their respective rights and interests duly determined and maintained." This I understand to mean that when these people, like any other people, are needed by the Government, so many of them as are fit to bear arms may be thus employed. At all events, there is nothing in the bill to prevent such employment of them, and there appears to be great propriety in giving their supervision to the War Department, at least during the war, rather than to the Department of the Interior, or even to the proposed new Department of Industry, because they can then with greater facility be called into the military service of the Government whenever an emergency may require it.

I do not favor this feature of the measure, because of any inability on the part of our white soldiers to maintain themselves. They have done this to the full extent of every reasonable expectation. They have driven in the rebellion on every hand, and routed the minions of treason from many a stronghold. Every fair contest in this war has shown that

"Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just ;
And he but naked, though locked up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."

Viewed as a question of expediency, the argument in favor of a colored soldiery is none the less. If the Republic possessed ten times the astounding strength it has already displayed, and if the usurpation at Richmond were much weaker than it has ever appeared to be, still should we employ this agency in sustaining the former and crushing the latter. As Republicans we should favor it, as Democrats should we favor it, and as Abolitionists especially should we favor it. It is a matter that appeals directly to our philanthropy. It involves the interests not of this country alone, but of all countries ; not of the living

merely, but of all generations. It will most surely uproot and destroy slavery from the face of the earth. The example will not be lost upon the only American monarchy, slaveholding Brazil, nor upon the few Spanish American colonies that still foster the barbarous practice of chattelizing humanity. Carry into practice the provisions of this bill, and the New World, at least, will be free again as when first created, and all men be permitted to pursue their own happiness here unmolested by tyrants.

It would be unfair to leave this childlike people uncared for while the stalwart among them are fighting the battles of liberty for us as well as themselves; and equally so to turn them off upon the cold charities of a dominant race after the battles are over. Under the proclamation of the President they became the wards of the Republic, and we cannot, with any show of justice, disclaim the guardianship. Dispel the clouds and darkness that villanous local laws have imposed upon their minds, and they will no longer need our care.

It will not be possible, in the short time allotted, to revert to all the arguments in favor of this bill, but some of the reasons for it are so patent as to force themselves upon attention. While the scheme will much alleviate the new condition of self-reliance of these people, it will impose no new burdens upon the Government; on the contrary, it promises to yield a handsome revenue to the public treasury. At the same time, and above all, it will so strengthen the national arm as to speedily crush out the rebellion. To this war view of the subject alone, then, do I approach, for these are war times.

Contrary to the general opinion entertained two years ago, or less, the American descendants of the African make excellent soldiers. This has been demonstrated on numerous battle-fields, and in some of the most desperate hand-to-hand conflicts of this war. The testimony of officers over them is full and singularly uniform on this point. Only the other day, in the Chronicle of this city, was the following:

“General M. M. Crocker, of Iowa, one of the very best officers of the Army, who early entered the public service, and was an unswerving and leading Democrat in that State for many years. writes from Vicksburg, where he is now stationed, to a friend in Des Moines, under date of January 12, 1864, as follows: ‘The negro regiments now form quite an element in this army, and it is astonishing how completely all prejudice on that subject has been done away with. They make good soldiers—mild, good-natured, and respectful to their officers—easily managed, and, as far as they have been tried, fight as well as any troops.’ ”

And so, whether the testimony come from Vicksburg, Port Hudson, or before Charleston, from Louisiana, Tennessee, or North Carolina; whether from the general who has been taught from his infancy to despise the negro, or from him whose faith in humanity was imbibed from the Puritans, it is the same. Few of these people comparatively have been put under arms in this contest, and they but recently, yet have they achieved for themselves a new and certainly a brilliant reputation. We were told they had been known to fight well under other

flags, and that regiments of them had become famous in the wars of the East and also the West Indies; but they were not counted upon to sustain "the flag of our Union." Our excessively chivalrous Democratic friends were horrified at the bare idea of arming in defense of the nation what they were pleased to term property, and it was only when drafting approached too closely that they could see any virtue in it.

It is a favorite theory among persons educated at the Military Academy, that all men under similar circumstances of discipline and physical condition are about equally brave; that if there is any difference, it is owing to the bodily and not to the mental structure of the individual. And pleasant it is to find in that school of theories, one theory that is so nearly sustained by the experiences of this war. What with his physical training and discipline to obedience, the colored man will fight, and as bravely, I trust, as his white companion in arms. There is one characteristic about these people that eminently fits them for the sternest realities of war. They manifest more sympathy toward each other than do the white soldiers; and, as a consequence, instead of scattering they become gregarious in time of danger, and maintain the strength that is always found in union. They seldom, if ever, abandon their comrades in distress. During the many expeditions that our soldiers have made within the rebel lines, this peculiarity of the colored population has been observed. The aged, the infirm, and the helpless young have been the objects of their chiefest solicitude while escaping from bondage. Often in this war has the flight of Virgil's hero been illustrated. Many a swarthy Æneas has borne away upon his shoulder some old Anchises, while leading his little Ascanius by the hand, followed by his faithful wife carrying a little bundle, their lares and penates, from the cruel confederacy.

Another reason for strengthening the military arm of the Government by the employment of this agency, is that the slaves join the Union forces with alacrity whenever an opportunity offers. This is not regarded by them as a political contest, and party feeling never intervenes between them and duty. Convince the freedman of the rebellious States that downtrodden humanity needs his assistance, and at once he seizes his weapon and goes into the ranks. Instances are related where they have resorted to the most ingenious expedients to conceal physical defects in order to get into the army; and they have wept with disappointment over the adverse decision of an examining physician, so anxious have they been for immolation upon the holy altar of liberty. Here is patriotism; here an appreciation of that old Roman adage, *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*.

But the freedmen of the South are better fitted by nature and habit than the northern people to endure the climate of the insurgent States, and the toils incident to the life of a soldier therein. This is attested in many ways, but in none more forcibly and sadly than by the hecatombs filled with noble young men who perished in the swamps of the Chickahominy, victims not more of the climate than of the sickly sentimentality of that miserable specimen of a general whose chief solici-

tude, while leading a patriot army, was to guard rebel property and return fugitive slaves.

Colored soldiers will meet with the sympathy and hearty co-operation of the entire colored population of the South; and if it is demonstrated by a solemn act of Congress that their hitherto downtrodden race is to be lifted up and be made the recipients of national kindness, the white soldiers that are assisting to bear aloft the American flag will be equally welcome among them. This will give to the Union forces an advantage that has probably not been so fully enjoyed by an army in an enemy's country since the world began. It is an advantage that cannot be over-estimated. Why, the idea of an invasion by these people is terribly discomfiting to the usurpers, and hence their desperate exertions to deter us from obtaining their aid, by indiscriminately murdering all negroes found under arms, or in the uniform of the United States, as also the officers that lead them.* Their most barbarous treatment of our poor friends in the Richmond prisons is instigated by their fears upon this point. They dare not recognize their former slaves as soldiers to be treated according to the rules and laws of war. The weapon in the hand of the slave is truly the Ithuriel spear; the rebellion writhes under its touch. An army of colored men becomes an army of liberators in every sense; and if you would put a speedy termination to this war, this awful war, arm so many of these people as will bear arms, and take good care of the balance. Ay, sir, put one of John Brown's pikes in the hands of every traitor's slave, and let him earn his liberty. Men that would not be content with all the choicest blessings of the Republic are unfit to live in it. Let them perish. Mercy to them is cruelty toward God and humanity. Whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad, and though these people are beside themselves, yet are they sensitive to danger. They fear the men they have scourged in the pride of their power. The maned lion is not more dreaded by the lonely traveler in Africa, than is he whose fathers destroyed the lion by the trembling despots at Richmond.

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from California suspend a moment, in order that the House may receive a message from the Senate? The Secretary of the Senate announced the message.

Mr. COLE continued: I was about to say, Mr. Speaker, that every slave added to the Union Army is, in effect, also taking a soldier from the ranks of the rebels. The efficiency of an army depends upon how it is fed, clothed, and furnished. Without supplies it will fall to pieces in three days; and the man at home laboring for its support is as indispensable to its strength as the one that carries the musket. The plow is equally useful to the belligerent with the gun, and the sickle

* "Should they (the negroes) be sent to the field and be put in battle, none will be taken prisoners—our troops understand what to do in such cases. If any negroes have been captured during the war as soldiers in the enemy's ranks, we have not heard of them. We do not think that such a case has been reported."—*Richmond Examiner*.

with the saber. The ex-Secretary of War and his cohorts are so hotly pressed to maintain their ascendancy that they have ordered into their service, as we are told, all able-bodied white men within their lines between the ages of eighteen and sixty; and the rebellion will therefore soon be utterly dependent upon slave labor for its support. By so much, then, as you withdraw this support, by so much do you weaken the rebellion. And this, it seems to me, presents one of the most powerful inducements for the Government to use all available means to enlist colored persons in its service, and to withdraw their support from the rebellion.

But there is still another argument. Those ingrates who hold nightly carnival at Richmond over the wasted victims of famine, and whose requital for support long rendered is torture and death—these fiends in human shape have already entailed upon this Government, which they cannot destroy, an enormous public debt; and it is a matter of the first importance to prevent as far as possible its augmentation; and among the liveliest considerations for engaging the colored man in the Army is, that it is great economy to do so.

The African's powers of endurance, whether marching under a southern sun or laboring in intrenchments, surpasses that of the white man, and as a consequence his sanitary condition is better. So far as I have been able to gather facts, it excels that of the white soldiers in the proportionate of five to one.

It has been stated—I do not vouch for the fact, for I have not the data before me—that since this war began as many of the Union soldiers have perished from disease and hardship as in battle. If this be true, or nearly true, it furnishes another strong argument to the point under consideration.

Besides the hardiness and prudence of the colored soldier, he possesses a most commendable aptness for subsisting himself in an enemy's country. The training he has received, in many instances from niggardly masters, eminently fits him for this important duty.

But there is another point of view from which it will appear to be great economy to employ slaves as soldiers. A sufficient and satisfactory bounty for them, if we offer them no more, is their freedom and that of their race. They demand no further subsidy than the privilege of vindicating their rights, their "unalienable rights," of life, liberty, and labor. And shall we not accord them this poor privilege? Rather, shall we not avail ourselves of an opportunity to save millions upon millions which otherwise would need to be paid as bounties in order to keep filled our serried ranks? The aid of the bondman to humble or destroy his, and our would-be, oppressor can be obtained without the expensive routine of the enrollment and draft; and it shames me that he whose participation in the blessings of the Republic has been so limited should be among the foremost in its defense.

Another fact must not be overlooked. Desertions rarely occur among the colored troops.

From the general framework of our military laws, one is forced to the conclusion that it has been the purpose of the country to fill up and keep up the armies from other sources, and quite independently of the slave.

The enrollment act as it now stands reads, "all able-bodied male *citizens* of the United States" shall be liable to do military duty; and this in the face of the fact that colored people are not counted citizens, certainly not in the States where slavery is now or was lately practiced. So that this class of people have been virtually excluded from military duty under the law. And in the amended bill that passed this House on Saturday last you have incorporated a provision making them a part of the national forces; but you declare that the usual bounty payable to the drafted man shall not be paid to the colored soldier when drafted, nor to his family, but to a third party, even to the man to whom that same soldier has, upon compulsion, rendered the service of a lifetime. What justice, what logic in such a law? It is the old justice of the slavemonger still. It is the logic of the tyrant; and shall we never rise above them? Must our Republic be further scourged with bloody thongs before we can do right?

There is little room for disagreement among loyal men upon the proposition that our army ought to be increased; and is this policy of discouraging enlistments with a whole class to be continued, even by implication? Such certainly will be the just inference if we now fail to adopt the provisions of this act for a Freedmen's Bureau. Do gentlemen suppose that we have already enough colored troops in our army, and that we need no more of them? Or has the cruelty of the rebels toward these men deterred the Congress from tendering an equal provision to avail ourselves of their further assistance? Would the traitors, think you, forbear to make use of such an agency if they had it within their reach? While they dare not put arms in the hands of slaves, they are nevertheless conscripting them to labor on fortifications. In the *Globe* of but the other day was a statement that Extra Billy Smith, now Governor of old Virginia, lately of California, (and an exceedingly anxious candidate for United States Senator from there,) had ordered a draft for five thousand slaves in certain counties, to work on fortifications. Neither General Smith nor any other traitor has any scruples about this matter.

As to the feasibility of obtaining colored recruits, it is preposterous to deny it. We have already, according to reports, some fifty to a hundred thousand of them in the school of the soldier or under arms. Nearly all of these are from within the rebel lines, and there are full half a million more of them there, precisely in the predicament of so many prisoners, scattered over half a million square miles, surrounded by an imaginary wall thousands of miles in extent. Only encourage their coming forth, and the entire rebel army, though it had no other duty, would present but a feeble barrier to their escape.

I will read an extract in point from a letter from the Colonel of the

Second United States Colored Cavalry, dated Fort Monroe, January 15, 1864. It will throw a flood of light upon this subject.

"The progress of these two cavalry regiments is really wonderful. I commenced recruiting the second two weeks ago last Friday, and last Saturday—fifteen days—I had the second regiment full, and camps built, and men in camp drilling. They have comfortable stockaded tents, and fine clean quarters; cost to Government, two kegs nails and two thousand feet roofing to cover commissary and cook-houses. They cut all the poles and built the stockades and cook-houses, and the brick cook-ranges from old bricks. No better camp exists, or better kept, and these men drill creditably already, and not one has needed a reprimand yet, nor is there want of discipline. Uncle Sam never had as cheap a regiment raised before, and I think few better ones than this will prove itself to be in time. I am confident and hopeful, for I know this colored cavalry will be a success. When stripped for medical examination, nearly all are found to have awful whip scars, and when I asked one oldish chap, with a horrible back, if he meant to settle for it, he answered, 'I've been at that two years,' and on looking closely, I found he was our guide on the Kinston and Goldsboro' march, and piloted me to that battery my company took by assault, where I earned my leaf. Another burly chap kept looking at me, and to my astonishment I recognized a once skeleton that was attracted by my firing to the edge of a swamp, and suspiciously gave himself up. After being fed he returned and brought out four more wretches, all that were left of some sixteen that had been escaping for four months, the balance having been killed by dog and gun. We had the gratification of breaking up the pack of dogs that had been used. The leading trailer was sent to Syracuse as a curiosity. She was Cuba all over. We wanted to wring the owner's neck, but he was a non-combatant. I find in these regiments lots of contrabands I have picked up in raids, and it attaches them to me, to know I was their usher into liberty. I expect trouble to restrain these men when active duty comes; there is bitter and vindictive feeling in nearly all. The slaves are quite willing to pass through a Red Sea of traitors' blood to make their exodus from bondage into the Canaan of liberty."

It is gratifying to know that some of our officers have a keen appreciation of the advantages to flow from this arm of the service; and among them, as worthy of mention, is that live man who fully understands the rebel character, and comprehends the emergency, Major General Butler. How far they are to be supported and encouraged by the Government rests with this Congress, and that is the question.

There is too much of the chivalrous spirit of McClellan and Porter and Patterson, in the army yet; too much of West Point punctilio, and too little of earnest determination to conquer. Unless this nation awakes to the emergency, and takes hold of the instrumentalities that God in his wisdom has provided, this usurpation will not be put down.

The people have not yet fully made up their minds that slavery, the Jonah of our ship, must go overboard. Gentlemen on the other side of the House seem exceedingly anxious to save some remnants of it; and if for that end they will discourage the enlistment of white men, much more may they be expected to oppose the enlistment of negroes, which at once strikes at the root of slavery, and saps the foundation of their party. It will require greater audacity than most of the gen-

tle men on that side of the House possess, to return to slavery a man after he has fought for his country.

In my judgment, this war is not nearly over. It possesses a most dangerous element of desperation; and unless you are willing to totally discard the policy that at first and for a long time controlled it, by arming the slaves, you will not soon see the end. Already a thousand days and nights have the people waited and watched, but peace has not come. Hope has frequently brought it to our doors, but like a phantom has it fled again. Self-delusion may be a pleasant, but it is a most unprofitable business. Armies will move in the spring; other battles will be fought, and fields now unnamed will become noted in the history of this war. Its greatest hero is perhaps still unknown to fame. You may depend upon it, peace has been already postponed by our acting upon the belief that it is near. We have turned aside to discuss the rights of traitors, to the forgetfulness of the more important rights of humanity. The so-called rights of rebellious States have received a great deal of attention at our hands already, and all to no purpose, unless you first put an end to the rule of the slaveholders there.

This that we are dealing with is in no proper sense a rebellion as understood in this day. It is a most impudent usurpation of power by a little junta of men who had been too long trusted by the people. From the very commencement they have maintained themselves by military rule, and in no other manner. They have entirely discarded the plainly expressed will of the nation, and boldly undertaken to subvert free government. The wonder is—if there be anything wonderful under the sun—that they should have had the unbridled audacity to undertake this thing while professing to be Democrats, and to respect republican institutions. But to the philosopher this may not seem strange.

The contest between truth and error is not less active now than at any former period of the world's history. It is said, truth crushed to earth will rise again; and the same should be said of error, for it is constantly putting on new habiliments, the better to appeal to the passions of men. In fact, nothing has yet appeared upon earth, however good, wise, just, or beneficent, but it has met with opposition. Persecutions did not begin in the case of John Brown of Ossawatimie. Even He in whom both Jew and Gentile now concede there was no guile, was pursued, persecuted, and crucified in his own country. Galileo was forced to disavow his sublime theory of the planetary motions. Socrates the Just was made to drink the fatal hemlock. Religion, science, literature, law, government, have advanced through strifes, contentions, blood. As a general rule, the greater the virtue the more violent the assaults upon it. And our glorious Republic constitutes no exception: its destruction is sought, and no cause whatever is alleged by its assailants for their wicked course.

Apologists for crime have always been found; and this great crime, this crime against the whole human race, this crime, scarcely second in magnitude to the crucifixion, does not lack its apologists. They are

found everywhere, even in this Capitol. But no traitor, no abettor of treason, has had the temerity to charge any wrong against the Government of the United States. On the contrary, up to the very moment of the breaking out of the rebellion, it was proclaimed by men of all parties, and everywhere, to be the wisest, the best, most just and beneficent Government that had ever been established in the world. And none were so loud in these declarations as were the very persons who for the last three years have been trying to overthrow it; and none had enjoyed its blessings to so great a degree.

Alexander H. Stephens, lately a member upon this floor, and now the usurping vice-president, addressed a convention in his own State of Georgia, after the rebellion was inaugurated, and made use of the following language:

"Pause, I entreat you, and consider for a moment what reasons you can give that will even satisfy yourselves in calmer moments; what reasons you can give your fellow-sufferers in the calamity that it will bring upon us. What reasons can you give to the nations of the earth to justify it? They will be the calm and deliberate judges in the case; and to what cause or one overt act can you name or point on which to rest the plea of justification? What right has the North assailed? What interest of the South has been invaded? What justice has been denied? And what claim founded in justice and right has been withheld? Can either of you to-day name one governmental act of wrong, deliberately and purposely done by the Government of Washington, of which the South has a right to complain? I challenge the answer."

* * * * "Leaving out of view, for the present, the countless millions of dollars you must expend in a war with the North; with tens of thousands of your sons and brothers slain in battle, and offered up as sacrifices upon the altar of your ambition—and for what, we ask again? Is it for the overthrow of the American Government, established by our common ancestry, cemented and built up by their sweat and blood, and founded on the broad principles of right, justice, and humanity? And, as such, I must declare here, as I have often done before, and which has been repeated by the greatest and wisest statesmen and patriots in this and other lands, that it is the best and freest Government; the most equal in its rights; the most just in its decisions; the most lenient in its measures; and the most inspiring in its principles to elevate the race of men that the sun of heaven ever shone upon."

No parallel for this rebellion can be found in history. The conspiracy of Cataline approximates it most closely; but the Government against which he plotted possessed few of the excellencies of our own. In one particular have our American traitors faithfully copied after their Roman exemplar. They sought to destroy the Republic while yet intrusted with its affairs; and as with Cataline, so with our modern conspirators, ingratitude is conspicuous among their crimes.

While history furnishes no parallel to the rebellion of Jeff. Davis and his coadjutors, we are not without a picture of their perfidy, for which we are indebted to the genius of that great English republican and poet, Milton. He has shown us how Satan and his followers—a motley crew—rebelled against the authority of Heaven, and for precisely the reason that they were not permitted to control there. They preferred to rule in hell rather than serve in heaven. And so with

our late ex-President, our ex-Vice President, ex-heads of Departments, Senators, members of Congress, ministers to foreign courts, ambassadors, consuls, and dignitaries in large number, who hover about the slave-pens of Richmond, and make their headquarters there. Forgetting entirely the source whence was derived all the authority they ever had, they discard the verdict of their masters, the people, and set up for themselves an empire founded upon slavery; even upon slavery possessed of all the most repulsive and forbidding features of that heathenish practice; a slavery that ever drips with human blood, and fills the whole air with the groans of its victims.

Such is the acknowledged corner-stone of that empire; and are there any that would forbear to relieve these victims from such masters? Ours is the home of the oppressed of all lands, and shall it afford no relief to the oppressed of our own? A shame that we have so long belied our professions! A shame and a disgrace that the great American Republic should suffer its free Constitution to be made the bulwark of tyranny! We have tolerated this fallacy of one man owning another too long. It is utterly indefensible on any ground, and will bring trouble upon any people that adopt it. There is a principle of compensation running through all nature that will not permit the violation of a law with impunity. The reverse tide may be slow, but it is sure to come. I doubt not the next generation of people in Kentucky will wonder that their distinguished Representative on this floor, [Mr. CLAY,] in the third year of this slaveholders' rebellion, should talk so confidently about property in man. Why, it is self-evident that liberty is an inalienable right, no matter what custom may happen to prevail in the Barbary States, or in the Border States, or in any other States.

Gentlemen are constantly reverting to some old condition of things and claiming that we should shape our conduct by what some others have said or done here or elsewhere under other circumstances. As for me, sir, I have no more regard for precedents in these times than had our colonial ancestors when they declared the great truth that "all men are created equal." They had the courage thus to strike down the ancient theoretical distinctions of blood. All the notions of all the nations in all the centuries touching royalty and nobility were swept from the New World on the 4th of July, 1776, and the Old World is learning the lesson slowly. Precedent is only respectable when it accords with right reason. No matter how many examples may be cited to sustain slavery, men are now looking at it in the light of reason. Its pangs are not at all alleviated because of the multitudes that have suffered them.

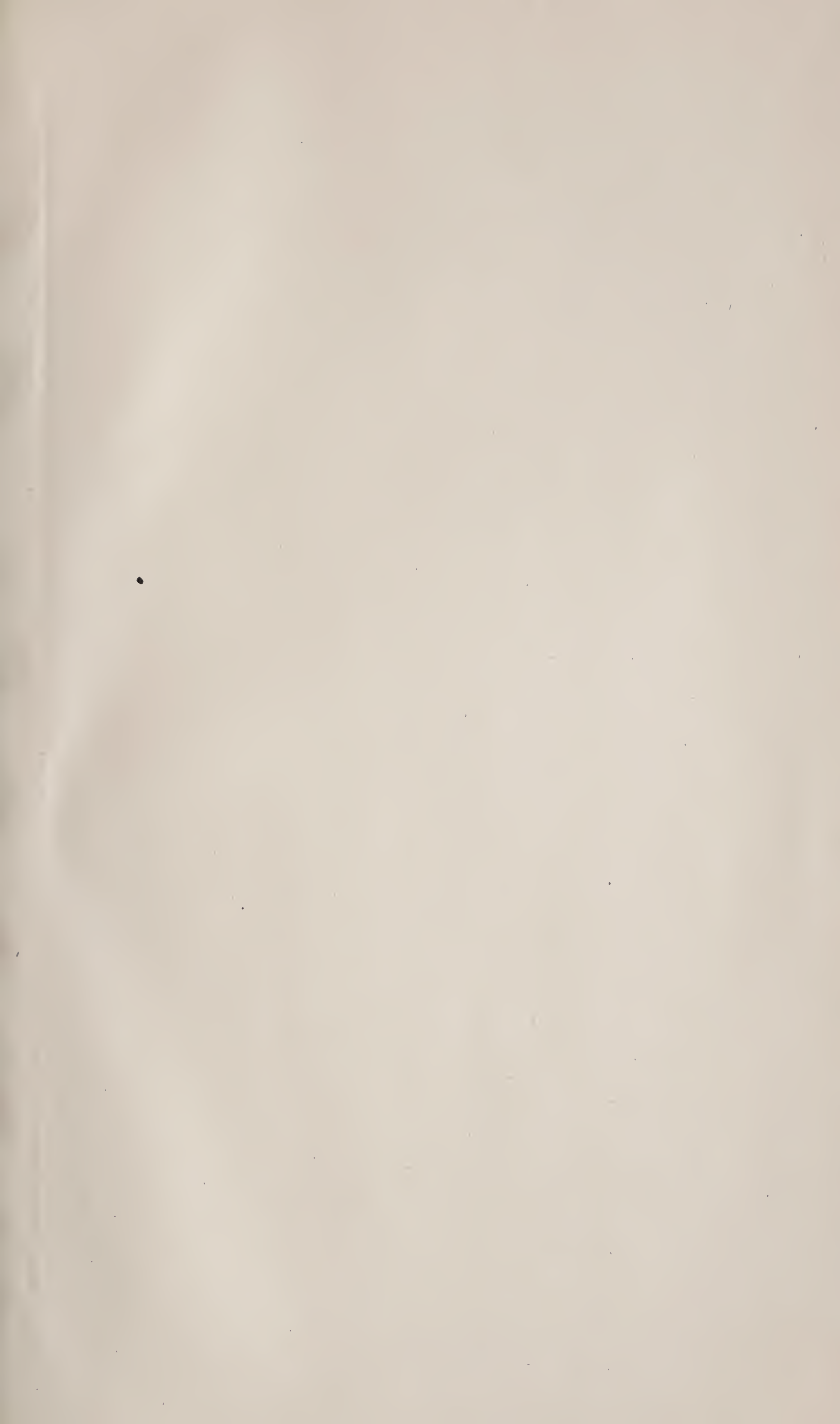
"Slavery, thou art a bitter draught.
And though thousands in all ages
Have been made to drink of thee,
Thou art no less bitter on that account."

In the United States of America slavery has forfeited every sem-

blance of right to recognition ; and I regret that our worthy President has seen fit since this war began to give it any countenance in his public acts. The proclamation would have been still more palatable had it contained only the words, " Slavery has undertaken to destroy the Republic, therefore slavery shall be destroyed. Done : Abraham Lincoln."

Mr. Speaker, if you would put an end to this cruel war be sure in good faith to take good care of these oppressed people. Arm the men. Put sharp weapons in every brawny hand among them ; and then soon will the ex-Secretary of War cry out to his followers, in the language of his great prototype :

" Long is the way
And hard, that out of hell leads up to light."



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